


The Awakening Orient

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LAYMEN'S MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

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ROBERT E. SPEER, NEW YORK.

Fifteen years ago one of the notable books on Asia was Mr. Henry Norman's account of the Peoples and Politics of the Far East. In that book Mr. Norman drew a very depressing picture of the situation, especially in China, quoting with regard to that Empire the couplet: "Aloof from our mutations and unrest; alien to our achievements and desires." A few years later Mr. Meredith Townsend, for many years editor of the *Friend of India*, and Mr. Hutton's successor as editor of the *Spectator* issued in a volume entitled "Asia and Europe" a collection of his essays on "Asiatic Life and Politics," written through a long series of years. In that volume Mr. Townsend took up the thesis of Mr. Norman, and hardened it into a fixed principle, contending that the Asiatic races had exhausted themselves; that their national character had now permanently set; that the chasm between the Asiatic races and the Western races was an unbridgeable chasm; and that the Oriental peoples were for ever inaccessible to the transforming principles of Western civilization. We are facing to-day a situation which in every particular belies these hopeless predictions. We are looking out on a world not hardened and fixed, not inaccessible to the principles of our Christian civilization, but open at its every door to the message which we have to deliver and to the life which we have to give. Four very simple facts will suffice by way of preliminary suggestion of the great change that has passed over Asia.

I remind you first of all of the great exodus of Asiatic students to study the principles of Western civilization in other lands. Not less than 8,000 students from China, not less than 1,000 students from

Korea, approximately 1,000 students from India are now away from their own lands, studying in other lands the principles of our Western civilization. Half a century ago a great stir was made here in the West by the Embassy of Anson Burlingame with his Chinese, and not long afterwards by the Iwakura Embassy from Japan; but here are more impressive embassies still, of thousands upon thousands of the best young men of those Asiatic peoples who, with no blast of trumpets, with no loud advertising, with none of the picturesque accompaniments of the Burlingame or Iwakura embassies have come to carry back from the West to the East the life-giving principles of our Western convictions.

There is, secondly, the fact of the tumult of opinion which we hear from one end of Asia to the other now assailing the ancient political ideas of Asia; a great debate over popular rights; a great demand for constitutional government. Mr. Townsend's idea that the people of Asia were satisfied with their absolutism has vanished into thin air.

In the third place, observe the fact, of no consequence in itself—rather, I think, to be deprecated in itself, but of immense significance because of what it imports—I mean the large change on the part of many Asiatic people in the adoption of our Western styles of dress. They might better, most of them, have kept their own; but the change of their styles of dress has stood for a far more significant thing—for the decay of old prejudices, for the opening of the mind to new ideas, for readiness to accept entirely new principles of life.

And, then, fourth, to speak only of one other such symptomatic fact, is the thunderous clamor of the Asiatic multitudes at our own doors. There has already passed out from the Chinese Empire into other lands a population larger than the entire population of

Canada or the entire population of Australasia. More than seven millions of the Chinese people are already living under alien flags, and they have drawn after them the sympathies of millions who have remained behind. The Chinese national debt already amounts to over 254 millions of pounds sterling. When you have bound the Asiatic nations to the west by such vital and golden bonds, you have set up relationships that will not be lightly sundered. And there are great masses of Chinese people pressing out from their country northward. In Mr. Putnam Weale's last book he tells us that clear up to Irkutsk in Siberia they now find the Chinese settlers; that they are eating their way at the rate of ten miles a year out of North China into the territories of the Mongol hordes, and spreading themselves out as an impenetrable barrier against Russian invasion on the north.

Four such facts as these will suffice to bring before us the enormous changes that have passed over Asia since Mr. Norman and Lord Curzon wrote their books on Asiatic conditions. But we are to view the matter in a more comprehensive and general way than this; and I ask you first of all to consider the great industrial awakening which we are watching taking place over the whole of Asia. That industrial awakening was absolutely inevitable; inevitable for three reasons. In the first place our trade and manufactures annihilated a great many of the old trades and manufactures of the people of Asia, and it was necessary for them to build up new industries merely for the sake of a livelihood. In the second place, they could only trade with the West by having wealth enough with which to trade or goods to exchange. In the third place they were ambitious to retain their own markets. We have very little idea of how immense the change in Asia has been. Let me remind you of the facts of Japan alone. In the year 1872 the exports from Japan were

17 million yen—about $8\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars. In 1882 they were 36 millions; in 1892, 91 millions; in 1902, 258 million; in 1907, 432 million. In that same period of time let me read you the facts about the imports. In 1872, they were 26 million yen; in 1882, 29 million; in 1892, 71 million; in 1902, 271 million; in 1907, 494 million. I would speak also of the immense railway development. I remember having been in Korea before there was a single mile of railroad laid in that land. An American engineer was then building the first railway embankment from Seoul down to the city of Chemulpo. Now there is a great trunk line of railway that runs from Fusan on the extreme south, clear up to the most northern section of Korea on the northwest, with branch lines, some built, others projected, tapping the country on either side. When I was in China twelve years ago there were only 200 miles of railway in the whole Chinese Empire. Now there are 3,746, with more than 1,600 miles more already under construction. All over Asia new industries are developing. We have little idea what the consequence will be when this industrial awakening has dominated the whole life of Asia,—with cheap labor, with raw materials at hand and produced by cheap labor, and turned into finished product on machinery built by cheap labor, right in the midst of the largest markets of the world, on a continent that contains more than half of the whole human race. In that day the West may well wonder in whose hands will be the commercial and industrial supremacy of the world. We may need our protective tariffs then for the sake of our own life against the industrial capacity of Asia.

I would remind you, in the second place, of the great intellectual awakening which we are beholding to-day in Asia. There in Japan, for example, is a whole nation sent to school. Men are wondering now

in some of the European nations what they are to do to overtake Germany and the United States and Canada and Japan. Gentlemen, they will never overtake us, because they have started too late in the race. We have a handicap on them—a long beginning of steady education down at the foundations of our national life. The men who have been governing Japan during the last generation were far-sighted enough to realize that the first thing to be done was to honeycomb Japan with a great system of popular education. China now perceives that they too must educate, and that is a far vaster proposition. The old Confucian educational system, as you know, has been abandoned. Temples have been confiscated, with their revenues, in which the new educational system is to be set up. The new attempts are crude, but the beginning has been made, and China's face is set sunwards. Twelve years ago there were only two or three—perhaps there were not that many—daily Chinese papers in the whole Empire. Now there are more than 200, educating great masses of the people who will never come to the schools. Then there was no Chinese system of post offices; now there are more than 2,000 post offices scattered all over the Chinese Empire, handling in the year 1906 more than 116 million pieces of mail matter. More wonderful even than this is the great intellectual ferment that has set in in the Mohammedan world. There is a great section of humanity which for 1,200 years has been held tight in the clutch of the hand of a dead Arabian of the seventh century; all its institutions, the fossilized institutions of primitive Arabia; its thought congealed beyond all possibility of living movement; and now the heat and ferment of a great life are stirring the whole Mohammedan world, and men's minds seem about to be released at last to think freely on the problems of human duty and of human relationship. I know

no more significant fact in the missionary situation of Asia to-day than the throngs of Mohammedan students at the doors of the missionary schools and colleges. It is a wonderful thing to see the crowded schools and colleges of the missions in Japan and China and Siam; but it is more wonderful still to see that great company of Mohammedan boys, and still more remarkable that great company of Mohammedan girls, pressing into the mission schools in Persia and Turkey. At last Asia has begun to think and to speak, and her language is the language of free men. Of course there will be through all of Asia, with this enfranchisement of men's thoughts, license and excess. You have got to expect that the ferment of the new life will bring with it many extravagances; but at least we are looking on 800 millions of our fellow creatures whose minds are moving toward freedom, freedom to deal not only with the problems of destiny, which they have always sought to do, but with the problems of their present duty.

I would bring to your attention, in the third place, the great political awakening which we are watching now in Asia. It is seen in the demand for constitutional government and representative institutions. All of Asia has watched what has happened to the one great absolutism of Europe. They realize now that absolutism cannot stand against a smaller power that is dominated by the living principles of free institutions. They have seen what has happened in Japan when the Emperor himself, of his own free will, gave up his absolute power and hedged himself in by constitutional limitations, and the rest of Asia is calling now for the same enfranchisement, for those same free privileges. The Mohammedan world, a large section of it, hopes that it has already secured it. Constitutional government has been established in Turkey. There may come reactions, undoubtedly there will; but you

can never turn entirely back the hands on the face of that clock. Man's new participation in freedom and liberty can not be wholly recalled. And the conflict is still going on. You know how bitterly it is going on to-day in Persia, where the constitution given last year has since been withdrawn, to be given again I doubt not if the Shah arranges his financial affairs with outside nations so that their pressure will no longer fortify him against the demands of his people. We are looking out on great masses of men politically awake to their rights. And we see in Asia also—just as we see all over the world—a great growth in the spirit of nationalism. We see it in the nationalization of the railways in Japan. We see it in Chinese recent re-purchase of all the railroad rights which she could get back, which she had sold to foreign concessionaires. We have seen it in her buying back her mining rights. We saw it a little while ago in the Tatsu Maru affair, when China was deeply stirred against Japan. In the city of Canton they held a mass meeting where a boy twelve years of age pleaded so patriotically with the people for a boycott against Japan that the whole multitude were melted into tears, where people brought their articles of Japanese manufacture and destroyed them in bonfires, testifying to the conviction that China must stand for herself against all the world, even as against the Asiatic world. The old cry of "Asia for the Asiatics" has broken itself up now into the cries, "Japan for the Japanese," and "China for the Chinese," and "India for the Indians," and you and I need not think that we can set before the rest of the world an object-lesson of "Canada for the Canadians or for the white races," and "American for the Americans or for the white races," and not have Asia learn the lesson from us and demand that Asia shall be for the Asiatic, and the yellow lands for the yellow men. Now, this great growth of nationalism throughout

Asia is no continental thing alone. Asia is simply feeling the thrill of great world movements. The last half century has seen a tremendous growth of the spirit of nationalism here in the West. You will find a fascinating study of it in Professor Reinsch's work on "World Politics." What we see now in Asia is simply confirmation of the fact that Asia has at last passed out from her old segregation and confinement and seclusion, and is no longer aloof from our mutations and unrest, alien to our achievements and desires.

In the fourth place, I would remind you of the great moral awakening which we are seeing in Asia to-day. I believe myself that down at the bottom, what we call the political awakening of Asia is merely an ethical awakening there. After all, the theory of man's rights rests deeply on moral principle. It betokens an awakened man; a consciousness of his manhood; and this demand through Asia for constitutional government and representative institutions is, at the bottom, merely the Asiatic coming to the moral consciousness of his manhood. A century ago he held himself aloof from us in contemptuous superiority. Then we beat him and we browbeat him until he cringed before us like a menial. And now he is standing up on his feet again and proclaiming that he also is a man. And it is that moral consciousness of his manhood, due to the great ethical awakening of Asia, that lies at the bottom of its political discontent. And it is not alone that Asia has discovered her political rights. Asia has begun to realize also her political duties; and the conception of political duties is nothing but a great moral principle. She is feeling now after a human brotherhood. She is realizing at last what her own religions never told her, but what they were never able to extirpate from the breast of man—that it is the same colored blood

that runs in the veins of every race; that our national distinctions are matters of Divine appointment, to be sure, but that they do not run as deep as our common suffering, our common sorrow, our common sin, our membership in the common family, our redemption by a common Saviour. And in some little measure, at least, the consciousness of all this is breaking as a great moral discovery on the minds of our Asiatic brothers. If it is expressed in racial resentment, the resentment feels itself to be the resentment of an equal. The best men of Asia, moreover, are feeling more and more every year the sense of Asia's deep moral need. They are realizing that what they have is not adequate for their necessities. Let me read you a word from Count Okuma, only a little while ago Prime Minister of Japan, and still one of its leading statesmen: "It is a question," says he of Japan, "whether we have not lost moral fibre as the result of the many new influences to which we have been subjected. The development has been intellectual and not moral—the efforts which Christians are making to supply the country a high standard of conduct are welcomed by all right-thinking people. As you read the Bible you may think it is antiquated, out of date. The words it contains may so appear, but the noble life which it holds up to admiration is something that will never be out of date, however much the world may progress. Live and preach this life," he was speaking to the young men of Japan—"and you will supply to the nation just what it needs at the present juncture." Now, I do not read his words as any acknowledgment of Japan's religious need. I shall speak of that in a moment—but only of his consciousness of its deep moral need. A great sense of what it ethically requires is passing over Asia. We see it in the transformation of Hinduism under our very eyes; in the growth of the reform movements out of Hinduism; in a deeper

transformation even inside Hinduism, that tries to slough off its old immoralities and to lift Hinduism in its moral standards and requirements to the level of ideals which the people have only learned from their contact with Christians and with Christian civilization. We are looking at a continent morally awakening. Mr. Sydney Gulick, who came home not very long ago on furlough from Japan, stated that before he left Japan he passed by again the great mound which commemorates Hideyoshi's successful invasion of Korea. That mound was built out of 30,000 Korean ears. If you were to go into Japan to-day you would find no monument of Russian ears built to commemorate Japan's triumph in her last great war. What wrought that transformation? Those great days when Japan built her memorial out of Korean ears were palmy days of Buddhism, but a great moral transformation has passed over the Empire, that would make it impossible to cut off the ear of one conquered foe. All Asia is feeling in some measure the thrill of a great real moral awakening.

And lastly I would remind you of the great religious awakening we are witnessing in Asia. We see it, first of all, in the eager, aggressive Christian Churches of Asia; Christian Churches as filled with evangelistic zeal—would they were more filled—as our Churches here; some of them more filled. We have got in these lands of ours no Churches more worthy in their evangelistic eagerness and intensity than the mission Churches established by the Church of England in Uganda or by the missions of our American Churches in the long-closed Empire of Korea. We are seeing, all over that Asiatic world, great bodies of Christian men developed who are alive to their duty toward their fellow continentals. And we see the religious awakening far more widely extended even than those. "Up and down India," said Doctor Charles Cuthbert

Hall in a letter which he wrote back to the missionaries in India after his last visit, that ended so tragically in his lamentable death, "I have met," he said, "as I have gone up and down through India, great multitudes of men who are unprepared as yet to connect themselves with any Christian Church, but for whom the popular forms of the ancient faith have become inadequate if not distasteful, and to whom the name of Jesus Christ, and the principles that are associated with that name, are taking on increasing attractiveness and value." And those men, if you would only search them out in Asia are not few. Mr. Migogawa told Doctor Barton of the American Board on his last visit to Japan that he believed there were a million unconfessed believers in our Lord Jesus Christ in the Empire of Japan alone. I know no more significant sign of the change that has passed over Asia in this regard than was given us just the other day in Marquis Ito's transformation of opinion. Marquis Ito is the leading statesman in the Japanese Empire, and you remember how, twenty years ago, he publicly announced that he had no use for any form of religion; that Buddhism and all religions were only so many diverse forms of superstition. Just the other day in the city of Seoul, at a banquet given to him in connection with the dedication of the Young Men's Christian Association Building, he said he had always believed that morality was essential to a national life, and that he now believed that religion was essential as an adequate basis of morality. Asia at last is coming to realize not that she must have a religion—she has always had that—but that she must have a moral religion, and that only a moral religion can satisfy the deep and fundamental needs of her life.

Now, my friends, this situation, so hastily and inadequately sketched in these words, lays tremendous burdens of responsibility upon our shoulders here

to-day. That which Asia is groping after in her darkness, you and I have to give to her. The God that she has ignorantly worshipped we know and are able to declare unto her. The desire of her heart, however imperfectly she may have defined that desire to herself, is Jesus Christ, the Desire of all the nations. And this great awakening of hers has in it the promise of great peril and disaster unless it is taken in hand by us and pervasively moralized, and you cannot moralize it without Christianity. Western civilization has crashed against the old religious systems of the East, and they are absolutely doomed; they cannot stand against the steady hammering impact of the ideas that are imbedded in Western civilization. There is only one religion which can live with Western civilization. Western civilization is an awful thing. There is only one religion that can live with it; that is the religion which has supplied all that is good in it, and to which alone we must look for the correction of the evil—and there is much evil in it. And that religion alone can meet the profound needs of Asia's life as her old moral sanctions die, and she wanders out with no God from the abandoned worship of her ancestral shrines. The great question before us with regard to Asia now is the simple question as to whether her awakening shall be a renaissance without a reformation, or whether we are going in the midst of the great intellectual quickening that is coming to Asia with the moral life which alone can rob that intellectual quickening of its perils and direct it to the service of the glory of God. History, as Professor Lindsay tells us, contains no record of a great moral upheaval that did not spring from a new religious impulse. Will you find, in all the history of the nations, a single instance of a morally reborn state that was not reborn out of the impulse of a new religious principle? Only those men who have had immediate connection with the

unseen hold in their hands the resource by which they can deal with the great problems of the Asiatic world to-day. It is our splendid and unprecedented opportunity. That great gathering of missionaries which assembled only a few months ago in the city of Shanghai was not made up of fanatical or of eccentric men; and I would remind you of the words which they soberly adopted after discussion, on the recommendation of a committee which had long had this resolution under its consideration: "Resolved, that the new political and social conditions in China render it possible that every individual in the Empire may now be reached with such a knowledge of the world-saving mission, the redeeming death and resurrection, and the heart-transforming power of Jesus Christ as will suffice for the acceptance of Him as a personal Saviour. That we appeal to the whole Christian world to rise in its might and, trusting to the guidance of Almighty God, realize more adequately its responsibility in this gigantic undertaking." Now, once again a day that came fifty years ago and passed has come back to us. There are some of you old men here this afternoon who can remember that day, when the Taiping rebellion had shaken the Chinese Empire clear to its heart; when, if it had not been—so far as we may judge—for the intervention of Chinese Gordon the Taipings might have overthrown the existing dynasty and opened all the doors of China to the propagation of Christianity half a century ago. They had annihilated idolatry in all the Yangtse valley. The great river ran with bobbing gods torn down from their pedestals. The temples had been destroyed in the cities and villages of no small section of the Celestial Empire, and the people turned sadly one to another and asked where they must look for help, seeing that the old gods had shown themselves of no avail. It was the day of all days for the evangelization of China.

As one of the Chinese preachers said to Archbishop Moule, "Mr. Moule, now is the day of our opportunity; we plead with you to strike while the iron is hot." But the day of that great opportunity was allowed to pass by. The temples rose again on their old foundations. The idols came back and sat once more on their pedestals, and looked down on the worshipping throngs, and men who for a little while had opened their hearts for a new faith turned back to the worship of their fathers' gods. My friends, is the present day to pass as that day passed? Nay, worse than that day passed; for many cannot turn back any more to the worship of their fathers' gods. The alternative now is whether we will take our brothers of Asia by the hand and lead them to the Throne of their God and our God, their Father and our Father, or whether without any God at all they shall turn sadly away from their old shrines and walk out alone upon the new paths from which no man's hand can now restrain them,

